

Discussion Notes: Hearts and Minds

America's Role in the early Post-World War II International System

- # 1 militarily and economically. Do anything (e.g., better than others).
- America's Self-Image & Selected Role in the World
 - Virtuous self-image: "we're good people," "benefactors." We're idealistic and pro-democratic & have a definitive, constructive contribution to make. America can be trusted.
 - Belief America is # 1 militarily & economically; we're invincible and can control events.
 - Acceptance of leadership of the free world (and collective security) as our responsibility (Truman doctrine); there's no one else to lead a collective defense against evil.
 - United foreign policy with support from all major social institutions ["This time is the last time ... Broadway musical.]

Causal Theories of American Participants

- Theories of National Security
 - Public drama "domino theory" of worldwide danger if American will and credibility are seen to be weakened or unreliable. Public drama requirements for national security.
 - Communism is a single, united political force (at least in the minds of Communists) and avowedly hostile to America and its values.
 - New phase of dangerous Communist assertiveness begins with Sputnik launch in 1957 [incl. development of ICBMs, Berlin and Laos crises, Cuban Missile crisis].
- Theories of Good and Evil; Well-Being; Ideology
 - The American way of life represents, in one package, the best combination of institutions and practices for

individual well-being and social progress (i.e., the free market, competitive political democracy with respect for individual liberties and rights, strong and healthy individuals). Communism and Communist revolutionaries are a great evil because, in reality, they create dictatorships, destroy freedom, tell people what to do, are associated with moral decay (drugs), and are aggressive ("muscle in") and sinister (subverting institutions and planning revolutions). [McCarthy, American Legion sponsors a Communist Take-Over Day, John Birch Society materials distributed in Oklahoma. Herbert Hoover says there is a higher percentage of Communists in the US than when the Bolsheviks overthrew the Russian government.]

Perceptions and Images; Breakdowns of Attention & Integrity

- Images of Vietnam and Vietnamese

- People don't want a Communist dictator. Basically their "hearts and minds" are on the side of democracy & America.
- Vietnam "is like a child" that needs time and protection to develop. It's "underdeveloped." [Westmoreland]
- Asians "don't value human life the way we do." [Westmoreland]
- The people are backward and unorganized. [Lt. Cocker (POW) says it's a nice country, except for the people, who mess things up.]
- Vietnamese government and ruling elites want to be democratic.
- The enemy is "the enemy" (i.e., as in a video arcade game.) ["I dinged him."]

- Breakdowns of Attention to Reality; & of Intellectual and Moral Integrity
 - Vietnamese victims (dead children, refugees, not asking the question, "what if my child were napalmed?")
 - US casualties (US dead, handicapped & paralyzed US veterans, families of dead soldiers)
 - Unrealistic (dramatic overlay?) perceptions of who is being aided
 - South Vietnam's "democratic" government is stage-managed by the US, with its leaders replaced by coup/assassination (Diem) or "fired", like middle-level managers, by the USGOV.
 - Affluent businessmen in Saigon (not idealistic yearners for freedom imagined by many Americans.)
 - Misperceptions of "favorable" motivations of VC & North Vietnamese
 - VC say they fight nationalistically for "freedom, independence, and national unity." They're like the US revolutionaries in 1776. They continue a long tradition of "struggle" for national independence from foreign domination.

Technology

- Engages motivations and provides satisfactions in its own right: bombing (if you're the pilot) is thrilling, enjoyable, and professionally satisfying, especially if you're being shot at. ["like a singer singing an aria," "Indy 500"]
- Power and excitement from high tech firepower ("firecrackers").
- High tech reduces awareness of victims & suffering.
- High tech offers comparatively little danger of retaliation.

American Political System

- Lying American Leaders

American leaders who perceived it necessary to lie to the American people.

- American Public Opinion

- United about crucial symbolisms & goals (see above)
- Indifference & No Independent Knowledge
 - teenage girl who says she's "rather think about what's happening to me"
 - Trucker who says we're on the side of the North Vietnamese, aren't we?
- Deference to elected leaders and political institutions. Avoided implications of thinking for oneself: support for leaders because of unpleasantness & awesome implications of being in opposition (e.g., Mr. and Mrs. Emerson of Concord, MA. whose son, a Harvard graduate, was killed in Vietnam). ("It would mean it was meaningless..."). [+ Milgram's and Kelman's explanations]
- American public was easy to lie to (Ellsberg).

American Socialization (General)

- Identification with country and respect for authority (generally).

Foreign policy consensus from all major institutions (incl. Bob Hope).

Lt. Cocker, "faith in family, God, and country got me through." "If I was a good American, it was because you made me a good American." "It's what you learn by age 10" Mothers & obeying camp regulations... military life is only the next step.
- Culture roles of "being a man" and heroism. (Commitment to win, and to fight for and defend things that are important, notwithstanding hardship, is the mark of a man.)
 - Sports socialization of males: Several football scenes, coaches psyching-up teams, Lt. Cocker quotes his coach, "when the going gets tough, the tough get

going....winners never quit and quitters never win."

- Church: service before a football game..."God cares about serious business...men will be made here tonight"... role rehearsal for being winners in "the biggest game of all... life."
- Other cultural roles adopted by the military ("business," being a professional")

Socialization (Military)

- Military pride: George Patton III: hymns, reverential Church service, "bloody good bunch of killers." Former Marine [Floyd] who told about crying at the Marine barracks ceremonies in Washington, when he first enlisted, because he was so proud of his country and to be a Marine...and his bitterness that now "they've taken that away from me." (The loss of the pride was more painful to him, he said, than being paralyzed for life.)
- Warriors (American Indian) & other brave heroes are especially honorable.
- Movie images.

Learning Lessons

"We're trying not to ..."